

CAA News

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CENSUS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ❖ January 2003

Pay Up or Lose Out!

Your CAA dues for 2003 are due now, unless your address label includes the notation "03pd." It's easy to renew—just send a check for \$5 (or \$10 for 2 years) to CAA, P.O. Box 1480, Suitland, MD 20752. (And while you're at it, enclose a note about what's been happening in your life.)

Vigorous Exercise vs. Walking

A 3-year study involving more than 73,000 women ages 50 to 79 found that walking briskly can protect against heart disease as well as vigorous exercise. Women in the study who spent at least 2-1/2 hours a week walking briskly had a 30-percent lower risk of developing heart disease than those who rarely or never exercised, the same reduction recorded for those who performed more vigorous exercise.

Source: New England Journal of Medicine, Sept. 5, 2002

Sweet Memories

If you've ever longed for some of the candies you remember from "the good old days," check out the catalog of The Vermont Country Store. Some of the candies available are Walnettos, Turkey Joints, horehound drops, licorice pipes, Necco Wafers, Valomilks, and Goo Goo Supremes. Call them at 1-800-362-8440 to order their current catalog. Another source of old-time goodies is Hometown Favorites; call 888-694-2656, or visit www.hometownfavorites.com.

Rheumatism Relief on the Way

In recent clinical trials, twice-a-month injections of a drug called adalimumab, or D2E7, gave rheumatoid arthritis sufferers fast, long-lasting relief from joint pain and inflammation. Denver Arthritis Clinic rheumatologist Michael Schiff says, "The results have been spectacular." The drug is expected to be widely available in a year or so.

Excess Vitamin E May Be Harmful

The August 14, 2002, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association reports that people over 60 who take excessive amounts of vitamin E may suffer longer and more severe symptoms from respiratory ailments than those who do not. The recommended daily amount of vitamin E is 15 milligrams, or 33 IU, the amount contained in most multivitamin supplements.

Diet COLA for Retirees

Retired federal employees saw a minuscule 1.4-percent cost-of-living increase in the checks they received in January 2003, which cover the month of December 2002.

The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is the same for retirees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System. This year's COLA is also 1.4 percent for Social Security beneficiaries and for many veterans who receive benefits through the Veterans Affairs Department.

Retirees who left the government during 2002 do not receive the full COLA. Their increases are pro-rated based on the month they retired. Someone who retired in June 2002, for example, would receive half of the COLA.

Also beginning in 2003, the maximum amount of earnings that a beneficiary who has not yet reached full retirement age may earn without losing any Social Security benefits increased to \$11,520 annually. One dollar in benefits will be withheld for every \$2 in earnings above the limit. There is no limit on earnings beginning the month an individual attains full retirement age.

Medicare deductible for hospital services increased to \$840 for the benefit period. Coinsurance is \$210 for days 61-90 and \$420 over 90 days. Medicare Part B monthly cost increased to \$58.70.

DEATHS

[Again I ask that alumni living outside the Washington area notify us of deaths in their area.]

Arthur G. Palman, 85, who retired in 1975 as a regional personnel director with the General Services Administration, died September 8 at Washington Adventist Hospital from complications from heart surgery in August. He worked on the 1940 Census. His wife of 55 years, Pearl Werner Palman, died in 1998. Survivors include three children and four grandchildren.

Charles H. (Chip) Alexander, Jr., 55, died September 1. He drowned while swimming in Virginia Beach. Dr. Alexander taught statistics for 5 years at S.U.N.Y. in Binghamton, N.Y., then took a job with the Census Bureau in 1979. He moved quickly into his position as Assistant Division Chief for Longitudinal and Expenditure Survey Design in the Demographic Statistical Methods Division. He shepherded all aspects of the American Community Survey program, which has been called the “key to the Census Bureau’s future.” Survivors include his wife, Diane, whom he met while both were working at the Census Bureau, and two children.

Thomas A. Nash, 62, died at the Genesis Eldercare Center in LaPlata, MD, October 9. He had cancer. He retired as an accounting clerk from the Census Bureau.

Aleze Harris died August 17 in Phoenix, AZ. She retired with 30 years’ service in the mid-1980s from the former Business Division, where she was a statistical assistant. Survivors include two sons.

Beverly Causey died October 17 of internal medical problems. He was a principal researcher in the Statistical Research Division (SRD). He joined the Census Bureau in 1970 and remained in SRD his entire career. He worked primarily in mathematical statistics and published numerous papers. Most recently he had developed a model using SIPP data for estimating the length of time individuals participated in various government programs.

Hilda Sporn Karr, 82, died of congestive heart failure November 19 at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville, MD. She was a teacher in Montgomery County, MD, for many years. In the 1940s she was a clerk for the Census Bureau. Survivors include her husband of 60 years, William Karr, two sons, a brother,

and four grandchildren.

Donald Francis Lawrey, 86, died November 26 at the Rockville, MD, Nursing Home after a heart attack. He served in the Navy during World War II, and after the war he worked for the Census Bureau. He retired from the Central Intelligence Agency in 1977 after 25 years as a payroll specialist.

Howard C. “Ham” Lint, of Rose Haven, MD, formerly of Suitland, MD, died on September 22. Survivors include his wife, **Evadene Cliff Lint**, a daughter, two grandchildren, a brother, and a sister.

Glenn E. Harvison, 76, died October 3 in Sandy Spring, MD. Survivors include his wife, **Penelope “Penny” Harvison**, a son, and two grandchildren.

Genevieve Doris Welsh, 90, died December 13 in Silver Spring, MD. She had lung cancer. She joined the Census Bureau in 1939 and traveled all over the United States training census takers. She helped produce four national censuses. She later became a supervisor and trainer, and retired in 1972. There are no immediate survivors.

Eleanor L. Withers, 88, died at Greater Southeast Community Hospital in DC on December 18 with congestive heart failure. At one time she did clerical work for the Census Bureau, and she retired after 20 years as a reports accounting supervisor with the Army. Her husband, James B. Withers Sr. died in 1979. Survivors include three children, a sister, a brother, three grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

Promising Vaccine for Alzheimer’s

An experimental Alzheimer’s treatment could clear away the brain plaque that causes the disease, without the side effects previously seen in the approach, according to two recent studies. However, there are still problems to be overcome: 24 of the 360 people in one study developed a brain inflammation after receiving the vaccine. But the second study, using a more targeted version of the vaccine on mice, found that all the mice became as mentally sound as the controls and showed no evidence of brain inflammation. However, says Marilyn Albert, a neurologist at the Harvard Medical School, “It could take years before researchers come up with a safe vaccine that can clear away the plaque in the human brain without causing inflammation.”

News From Alumni

[Note that once again we have very little news from alumni. Please send us something about yourself and your life away from Census. Believe it or not, your former coworkers want to know where you are and what you're up to!]

Marie A. Sidleck reports that a month after she retired in 1997, her husband, Tom, had four-way bypass surgery. In October 1999 they cruised the Intracoastal Waterway in their Catalina 30 sailboat, a great adventure. After 7 weeks and 1,350 miles on the water, they reached Sunset Marina in Key West, stayed there for 2 months, then sailed across the Gulf of Mexico to the west coast of Florida. They visited Naples, Sanibel Island, and Ft. Myers before going across Lake Okeechobee and heading home. In 2001 they flew to Antigua to celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

She says, "We are now home and enjoy seeing our three grandchildren, who live in Columbia and Perry Hall, whenever we can. My youngest daughter is getting married in May, so we will be busy with those wedding plans. I enjoy keeping in touch with some of my old co-workers, Clif Parker, Chuck St. Lawrence, Diane Kitts, Dorothy Graham, Sandy Clow, and Del Coates, and love to hear from everyone. We are staying quite busy with the Solomons Island Yacht Club now."

Ibuprofen May Block Aspirin's Effects

Taking low-dose aspirin within 2 hours of taking ibuprofen hinders the aspirin's blood-thinning, heart-protecting powers, researchers from the University of Pennsylvania have found. This effect can be avoided by taking the aspirin first and waiting at least 2 hours before taking ibuprofen. (Many people take low-dose ibuprofen, such as youth-strength Advil, to help fend off the onset of Alzheimer's disease, an application suggested but not confirmed by some studies.)

Reappraise After Death of Spouse

Many people are unaware of the importance of getting their primary residence reappraised soon after the death of a spouse. You may save yourself thousands of dollars in capital gains taxes when you eventually sell your house if you remember to do this.

The difference between your original cost basis and the

ultimate sales price is your capital gain. A capital gain of up to \$500,000 per couple, or \$250,000 per person, is tax-exempt. But a reappraisal upon the death of one of the owners increases the cost basis for the deceased spouse, thus reducing the later capital gain for the survivor.

Also note that, if one spouse is moved into a nursing home and stays there, he or she will no longer be considered as living in the primary residence for tax purposes. Consequently, the capital gain exclusion becomes only \$250,000 for the spouse remaining in the residence. Ask your tax advisor for more details.

Drugs May Restore Lost Vision

Vision loss due to the "wet" form of macular degeneration or to diabetic retinopathy may be halted by a new class of drugs if taken soon after symptoms begin. Doctors have been amazed at the test results, which in some cases have rescued people from the brink of blindness and even restored near-perfect vision.

Several drugs are currently in testing, including rhuFab, anecortave acetate, and EYE0001, as well as an implant, Lilly's LY333531. Pfizer agreed only recently to pay \$100 million now and as much as \$645 million later for the rights to a drug known as Macugen, which is in the final stages of testing.

Experts caution that until the big studies are finished, no one can be sure how well the drugs will work, how long patients will need to take them, whether the disease will return, or whether there will be unforeseen problems.

Source: Senior Beacon, December 2002

PET Scans Aid Alzheimer's Treatment

Using a brain imaging test called PET (positron emission tomography) in addition to conventional tests for Alzheimer's disease can dramatically improve diagnostic accuracy and treatment. Researchers at UCLA found that the number of misdiagnoses drops by half when PET is added to conventional tests, which could cut unnecessary drug therapy and time misspent in nursing homes by half or more. In addition, people with early Alzheimer's could be diagnosed sooner and start treatment earlier, when new medicines are most effective. For more information, visit www.adc.ucla.edu and www.alz.org.

Hardening of the Arteries

Peripheral vascular disease (PVD), sometimes called peripheral arterial disease (PAD), is a common circulation problem in which the arteries that carry blood to the legs or arms become narrowed or clogged. Many people also refer to the condition as “hardening of the arteries.” PVD affects about 1 in 20 people over the age of 50.

More than half the people with PVD experience leg pain, numbness, or other symptoms—but many people dismiss these signs as “a normal part of aging” and don’t seek medical help. The most common symptom of PVD is painful cramping in the leg or hip, particularly when walking. This symptom, also known as “claudication,” occurs when there is not enough blood flowing to the leg muscles during exercise. The pain typically goes away when the muscles are given a rest. Other symptoms may include numbness, tingling, or weakness in the leg.

PVD raises the risk of a heart attack, stroke, or abdominal aortic aneurysm. Untreated PVD can also lead to gangrene, a serious condition that may require amputation of a leg, foot, or toes. If you have PVD, you are also at higher risk for heart disease and stroke. Check www.legsforlife.org or call 1-877-357-2847 for more information, and ask your doctor for a screening appointment.

More for Health Insurance

The annual Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program Open Season ran from November 11 through December 9. As you probably noticed, for the third consecutive year premiums jumped by more than 10 percent. Employee costs in the FEHB Program increased by an average 10.5 percent for fee-for-service plans and an average 13.6 percent for health maintenance organizations (HMOs). Despite the fact that the FEHB Program is the largest employer-sponsored health insurance program in the nation, covering nearly nine million employees, retirees and their dependents, it is not immune to the inflationary pressures that have driven up costs in the health-care industry. Factors contributing to rising health-care costs nationwide are the increased use of prescription drugs, an aging population, and advanced medical technology that people want and deserve.

In 2003, enrollees with self-only coverage will pay approximately \$4.45 more in premiums each pay period; those with family coverage will pay about \$10.21 more per pay period. And the government will continue to pay, on average, 72 percent of the total cost of FEHB premiums. Still a pretty good deal, compared to what many others have.

Simpler Prostate Test in the Works

A more reliable substitute for the popular PSA test may be available in a few years. In a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, a new screening method accurately distinguished between blood samples from men with prostate cancer and those without it. The test recognizes patterns of proteins rather than identifying a single protein. Most notably, the method ruled out prostate cancer for the 71 percent of men in the study with intermediate levels of PSA, who are often recommended for biopsy.

“PSA is very accurate when the score is high and when it’s low,” said Dr. David K. Ornstein, one of the study’s authors. With the new method, “We can minimize the number of invasive surgeries without compromising detection,” he said.

Thin Can Be Beautiful—Sometimes

A painter nearing the end of his job painting a large church steeple discovered he was running low on paint. To stretch out his supply, he thinned the paint and, after a couple of hours, thinned it again—figuring that, from the ground far below, nobody would notice the poor work.

But, as the painter and the parson viewed the work before final payment, a deep voice came from a dark cloud and said, “Repaint, you thinner, repaint!”